

The Church, part 4

(1 Timothy 3:1-7)

(preached Pine Grove 7/9/17; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Just for to feed my curiosity, I went to amazon books and typed in 'leadership' to search their website for any books on leadership..

The search came back with 190,411 books on leadership...

Things from leading an army to leading a business to leading an expedition up a mountain...

Needless to say, there is a wealth of information on how to become a great leader...

In fact, it is overwhelming...

If you started in kindergarten reading books on leadership, you wouldn't finish all the leadership books in your lifetime...

It is simply overwhelming to consider the things that have been written about the topic of leadership...

Now, within that 190,000 or so books, I am sure there is some valuable and helpful insight into leadership...

But since I am a simple minded and busy person, I dont have the time to search them all...

However, I do have the time to read about God's view of leadership...

Now, there are many passages about leaders in the Bible...

You could read about the leadership of Moses or David in the OT...

You could see how Peter and Paul and the other disciples led the early church...

But one of the greatest passages on leadership is found in 1 Timothy 3 on qualifications for leadership in the church...

You see, the greatest organization in the history of the world...

I am sure that John Wooden and other professional coaches can offer me a lot of insight into leadership of a sports team....

I am sure Warren Buffet and other successful business men can offer me insight into leading a company...

I am sure Douglas MacArthur and other military leaders can help me lead an army....

But if I want to lead the church, I need to learn how to do that from the One who established the church and that is the Lord Himself...

And I would even go so far as to say that leaders in the church can be successful leading anything in the world...

Because if you are qualified to lead the greatest organization the world has ever seen, you are qualified to lead anything...

Two weeks ago, we began a look at qualifications to be a leader in the church...

And the reason we are looking at that is because we are taking a closer look at what the church is this summer..

I have offered you 9 characteristics of an effective God honoring church...

A church that I hope we want to be at Pine Grove...

A church that I pray we are becoming slowly but surely...

We have started to take a slow journey through these 9 characteristics and so far, we have made it through 1 and 1/2 of them...

We have noted that Biblical preaching is a trait of an effective church...

It has often been said that a church goes the way of the preaching in the pulpit....

Good solid biblical preaching leads to good solid biblical churches...

Man centered, agenda driven preaching leads to man-centered and less than God-honoring churches...

And we talked about the nuts and bolts of good preaching...

That is must be driven by the words of the Bible...

That is must give understanding of the Bible to the people in the pews...

That is must be applied to the lives of the people in the church and lived by the man who is preaching it...

And I specifically spoke about my commitment to expository preaching, which is preaching that follows the flow of the verses being preached...

And is used to give sense to the meaning of what is written so that our understanding is changed and our lives are different because of it...

You see, the pulpit of a church is the pulse of the church and it must be checked regularly to make sure it is biblical and accurate...

From that first characteristic of a healthy church, we began a look at the necessity of qualified men leading the church...

And I began to go through 1 Timothy 3 which is the passage on the qualifications of church leadership....

These same qualifications are also found in the book of Titus as well, but for our needs, we have begun to go through 1 Timothy 3...

Now a couple reminders about what we have already discovered in 1 Timothy 3 in regards to qualified leaders..

The first is this...

Those in church leadership must have the desire to lead the church...

This is not a job that can be forced upon a man...

Church leadership is not singling out someone and then making them into a church leader...

Verse 1 of 1 Timothy 3 says that a man must aspire and desire the office of leadership within the church...

We talked about desire being the inward motivation to lead the church and aspire is the outward action to become a church leader...

In my case, I sensed a growing desire to teach and lead the church, so I talked to other men around men and took the next steps to apply to seminary and make preparations to go...

For men who want to lead in areas other than pastoring, they may see a desire to lead and so they approach other leaders in the church to figure out what it takes to become a church leader...

That is what can be referred to as the internal qualifications of a church leader...

But that is not all that is required...

Desiring and aspiring do not guarantee a place of leadership...

Then comes the external qualifications of being a church leader, and those are the standards that begin in verse 2 of 1 Timothy 3...

And we began this list two weeks ago by taking about the terminology of church leadership and how Baptists have confused the terms over the years...

Verse 2 of 1 Timothy 3 speaks of the role of 'overseer' in the church...

This is the position that is also called the elder or bishop of the church...

In terms of what an overseer does, it is the highest office in the local church...

He cares for the flock that God has given to him to serve and lead....

Overseers would include pastors but also other men who oversee the work of the church...

Men who handle the physical upkeep of the church...

The finances of the church...

The evangelistic efforts of the church..

The business aspects of the church...

Overseers are those who protect and keep the church operating...

Now the confusing thing for us Baptists is that in the 1800s, many churches began calling their overseers deacons...

Or they began giving the work of overseer to the deacons in the church....

And for that reason, many churches now have men who are overseers but called deacons...

And then you have some churches where deacons are mixed with overseers but still called deacons...

Though we may be confused, the Bible is clear...

Every church should have elders and deacons as separate positions within church leadership...

Now, the qualifications for both offices are very similar but there are differences...

We will get there as we look at deacons in the next few weeks...

But for now, we simply need to know that 1 Timothy 3:1-7 provides the qualifications for overseers and elders within the church...

And we made it all the way through verse 2 of these qualifications last week...

The first is seen in verse 2 as the qualification of being above reproach..

And we defined this qualification as someone who lives such a life that no one can bring a charge against him..

He isn't sinless, but his life is not a pattern of sin...

The second qualification there in verse 2 is the husband of one wife...

Clearly, this means he is a man who has eyes one for his wife...

He isn't a flirt or a womanizer...

This qualification is not concerned with marital status necessarily..

Single men are not disqualified and neither are widowed or divorced men.....

The issue is this...

If a man is married, he needs to be a one woman man..

The 3rd qualification is temperance which is best seen as a clear thinking man...

He is level headed and his reasoning isn't clouded by emotions or anything else...

The 4th qualification is prudent which we defined as a man who takes his job seriously...

He is a careful man who doesn't act on impulses or is too carefree to take his role seriously...

The 5th is respectable which speaks of a life that is admired by others and not out of control...

The 6th qualification is hospitality, which isn't just care and concern for people he likes but kindness toward outsiders and strangers as well...

Church leaders cannot be biased to people just like them since the church is not made of people just like them but from all walks of life and cultures....

The 7th qualification that we mentioned briefly two weeks ago was the qualification to teach...

Which assumes that the man deserting to lead the church should have a working knowledge of the word of God that he can teach it to others...

This is a requirement to go to seminary or even teach a Sunday School class, but it does suggest that a leader in the church should be able to teach the things of God to others around him...

IT assumes the man is a student of the Bible in personal study and is a learner of the Bible and growing in his knowledge of the Word...

This would prevent new converts to Christianity from stepping into roles of leadership...

Unfortunately, Baptists have often thrown new Christians into positions of leadership and suffered greatly because of it...

On the other hand, this doesn't mean the person has to be older to serve the church in leadership but it does mean there must be some Christian maturity evident in their life since they should be able to teach the basics of the Christian faith...

Now that brings us to the 8th qualification listed here beginning in verse 3, which is not addicted to wine..

Now, this verse has caused all kinds of controversy in the church....

Let me give you the extreme ends of what it means to not be addicted to wine....

The one end of that is clear...

A drunkard is qualified from leading the church...

The other end is the church that says a man can't touch alcohol if he desires to lead the church...

That isn't the teaching of this verse either...

The verse simply says that an overseer must not be addicted to wine...

I think the best way to view this is that he can't be seen as a drinker...

He can't be seen as someone whose life is marked by alcohol...

If every time you see him, he has a drink in his hand, this is the kind of man disqualified from leading the church..

He may never be drunk when you see him, but he just has the reputation of a drinker...

And the issue is this....

He simply isn't a good example of a leader in the church...

The man of God qualified to lead the church may drink but it shouldn't be a priority in his life...

If it is, he is unqualified to lead the church...

Now, some churches have adopted too high of a standard here and some have lowered the bar too much here...

And I would say that every situation must be examined individually before saying a man is or isn't qualified according to this standard....

The second qualification in the beginning of verse 3 is that the man aspiring to lead the church must not be pugnacious...

The Greek word for pugnacious means that he is not a giver of blows...

In other words, he doesn't resort to punching people to settle disputes...

He isn't quick tempered...

And I don't think it is a coincidence to connect wine and fist fights right here....

It seems that alcohol contributes to violence very often, but the man desiring to lead the church is not a violent and easily angered man...

He isn't pugnacious, but has great patience and self-control especially when it comes to violent outbursts..

I think we could also include verbal abuse as well here...

Church leaderships cannot erupt in a war of words either...

They don't yell or talk over but listen and consider...

And that leads right into the 10th qualification listed here and that is a spirit of gentleness...

Church leaders must be gentle men...

This speaks of kindness and especially patience toward others...

It marks a man who considers others better than himself...

He is not demanding or overbearing but gentle and kind and considerate and patient with all...

This would also include the ability to not hold grudges and be bitter toward others...

Gentleness comes from being quick to forgive and overlook offenses...

This is not a call to weakness or silence or timidity.

Church leaders are not door mats, but they can't be bulldozers who roll over everyone in the leadership...

Christ is the greatest example...

Bold preacher and leader but also one who puts kids on his lap and never was bothered by the needs of people who came to Him in need...

An 11th qualification goes hand in hand with this...

This is the qualification of being a peaceable man...

Church leaders are looking for fights, they are looking to end fights and disputes...

They don't stir up trouble, they help others avoid trouble...

Blessed are the peacemakers, and church leaders are just that...

They don't compromise the word of God to get peace,
but they seek peace in all situations whenever possible...

A 12th qualification ends verse 3....

And that is that qualified church leaders must be free
from the love of money...

The Bible is clear...

The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and
that is certainly true for those who lead the church...

Those who seek to lead the church to line their pockets
and load their bank accounts use the church for personal
gain and greed...

And there are 1000s of people who have done that over
the years..

From pastors to church leaders to people in all sorts of
roles in ministry...

Greed and a love of money disqualify many men from
leading the church....

You can't love the world and the things of the world and
serve the Lord's church...

The qualified leader loves the Lord and the Lord's people more than he loves money...

A 13th qualification is found in verse 4-5, and this is the qualification of a church leader's home life...

Let's read it....

***4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity
5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)***

The proving ground for church leadership is the leadership that a man has shown in his own home...

Now, this is where matters of divorce and remarriage must be considered..

How well has man managed his personal life reflects how well he can manage the life of the church...

What does his relationship with his wife and children look like?

Does he provide for their needs?

Is he well loved by his wife and children?

The idea of a household under control is not one of domination, but is his home life chaotic in terms of the behavior of his children and the activity of his wife...

Now, people have done all sorts of things with this verse...

Some have said that a childless man is not qualified to lead....

That is assuming too much with what we see here....

Whatever household this man manages....

Whether he is single, widowed, or married and childless, how well does he manage it?

The issue is order versus disorder...

When it comes to children, there are a couple things to consider...

One, in my opinion this doesn't mean that his children have to be saved...

First, salvation is difficult to determine in children and even in teens...

So the issue isn't salvation of his children but the direction of their lives....

Are they good kids in the sense of respectable and under control?

Second, grown kids are not in view here...

You can't hold a man responsible for the behavior of kids out of his home...

So, this qualification pertains to the management of kids in his direct care...

Now look, management of the home is very subjective...

Some may look at my life and see a well managed home...

Some may look at my life and see a home in need of better management....

This qualification must be graciously applied in a case by case basis...

Ill give you an example...

If I saw a man with well-behaved kids simply because he forced them to be behaved, I would be very reluctant to see him as qualified to lead the church...

On the other hand, if I saw a man with a lot of good qualifications but an out of control wife and children, I would be equally hesitant to see him as qualified...

A 14th qualification can be found in verse 6...

6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation [d]incurred by the devil.

A new believer is disqualified from serving in leadership for a time in the church...

First, there is spiritual maturing that must take place to qualify him for service...

Simply put, he needs more Bible in his head and life if he wants to serve the church well...

But then there is the issue of pride that comes along with church leadership...

And young men who are forced into church leadership often become very prideful men..

That is what it means to fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil...

You see pride and conceit as it is called here is a trap for the new believer...

He comes out of unbelief and then he is thrust into a position of leadership in the church...

And his head swells....

Some of the most prideful men I have ever met are those recently saved men preparing for church leadership...

They may be growing leaps and bounds in what they know, but their pride is growing just as fast...

And that is a dangerous combination to put in a position of leadership in the church....

Look, Jesus wasn't sent into ministry at 18 or 21 or even 25...

He was in his early 30s before he began ministry...

Im not saying young men can't do it, but new converts are not yet qualified to lead the church...

And Baptists are the world's worst at putting new believers in positions of leadership...

WE must be very cautious and patient with new believers...

There have been many a racehorse who left the gate in the lead but finished dead last...

A 15th and final qualification of the overseer is found in verse 7...

7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

We really get back to qualification #1 here because the man who wants to lead the church must not be a man who can be accused of any wrongdoing by those around him...

In short, he needs a good reputation with those around him...

This speaks of the world's view of honesty and integrity and uprightness of character...

And the issue is not that those outside the church must like him for the sake of liking him...

He needs a good reputation with those outside the church because that is his mission field...

Those outside the church are the ones he is trying to win to Christ...

The ones he is trying to preach the gospel to...

Church leaders should be likable people since they are called to care for others...

Nobody wants a man with a grumpy and disagreeable reputation leading the church...

Would you want to attend a church where none of the leaders were nice guys?

I mean it makes no sense to present the church to the world that is managed by people you don't like...

Now, this is a call for church leaders to be like the world...

That would disqualify them immediately, but it is a call for the men who lead the church to be an attraction to the world..

Conclusion

So, there you go....

15 qualifications of men who desire and aspire to lead the church...

15 external measuring sticks for the men called to lead the Lord's church...

And let me end with this...

No man will be perfect in all 15 qualifications...

The Lord is seeking perfection of life , right...

He is seeking direction of life...

And there have never been an overseer in church history who fills these qualification to perfection...

But on the other hand, no church in church history has ever been blessed by ignoring the qualifications as well...

Look, the standard is high to lead the greatest organization on the face of the earth..

And I am glad it is...

People who fuss about high qualifications for church leadership would never jump on an airplane for a cross country flight piloted by man who had never flown a plane...

And they would never agree to heart surgery performed by a man who had only watched it on youtube...

The day a church lowers the standards for church leadership is a day that church is lowered in the things that the Lord wants to do through it...

WE must keep the standard of the church leadership high...

The Lord of the church is worth it..

Amen.